

Testimony of Mr. James White before the Housing Committee in support of :

House Bill # 6461- An Act Concerning the Selection of Tenant Commissioners  
Senate Bill # 1076-An Act Concerning Resident Participation in the Revitalization of Public  
Housing  
Senate Bill # 1075- An Act Concerning Public Housing Grievance Procedures

March 1, 2011

Hello, my name is James White and I live at 22 Lourdes Court in Meriden CT. I am the President of the Public Housing Resident Network and I am the Resident Commissioner for the Meriden Housing Authority. The Public Housing Resident Network is a statewide organization made up of residents in both state and federal public housing who work together to not just talk about the problems in public housing but more importantly to work on the solutions to those problems. We seek to work with housing authorities to address mutual concerns.

First, let me say as the President of PHRN I would like to thank the Housing Committee for their support of our efforts over the years to insure that residents of public housing are no longer viewed as second class citizens and that as residents living in Connecticut we are as vital a part of the make-up of this state as everyone else is. So thank you.

Having said that, the three bills before you today speak specifically to ensuring that residents are indeed a part of the process and have a voice in those things that have such a strong impact on them and their families, as well as protection of those rights..

The resident commissioner's legislation (House Bill #6461) asks only that public housing residents are afforded the same right as everyone in this country has and that is you should elect who will represent you. To do otherwise would be nothing short of a dictatorship.

The legislation regarding resident participation in the revitalization of public housing (Senate Bill #1076) speaks directly to a very real fear and concern that residents have when their community is under redevelopment. Our fears and concerns are: 1) what will my community look like after revitalization, 2) will it still be a place I can raise my family, 3) will I be able to afford to live here after revitalization!, and 4) most importantly, will I be displaced through no fault of my own and be forced to leave a community that has been my home for so long. Without being a part of the process, not having a seat at the decision-making table, and not having a voice in the decisions that impact me and my family, my only choice is to accept whatever housing authorities and developers choose to do. By the way, the developers and housing authority administrators do not live in my community!

The legislation regarding the grievance procedure (Senate Bill #1075) is basically stating that whether you live in state or federal public housing you should be entitled to the same protection and enforcement of your rights and have the same basic rights as everyone.

I sincerely thank you for giving myself and PHRN members an opportunity to speak to you today.

Thank you